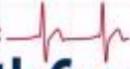


April 21, 2009

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SENATOR BLANCHE LINCOLN'S CALL TO ACTION: 
Taking the Pulse of Rural Health Care

Tour Stops in Augusta, Lake Village, Nashville, and Springdale

Dear Fellow Arkansan,

Last week, I completed my two-week, five-stop tour across Arkansas to "take the pulse" of health care in our rural communities. I met with patients, providers, and other health care professionals in every corner of the state to discuss challenges and solutions for delivering and accessing quality and affordable health care.

In Augusta, I heard from Arkansans who said that high deductible plans are not meeting their needs. As a result, these patients often miss out on important primary and preventive care because they cannot afford their plans' expensive co-pays and deductibles.

In Lake Village, I heard from patients about the need to improve dental coverage within Medicare and in private insurance. I also spoke with veterans who are forced to drive long distances to receive care at a VA facility and who expressed the great need for more VA clinics.

A provider in Nashville spoke about the difficulty in recruiting specialists into rural Arkansas. Health technologies, like remote patient monitoring or mobile imaging, may help to provide specialist access to rural areas, where it may not be efficient for each rural community to have a multitude of specialists located in their towns.

At my final stop in Springdale, I heard from seniors who have had trouble finding a provider who will accept Medicare. We must build our primary care workforce and address reimbursement inequities for these rural areas in order to help more Arkansans on Medicare gain access to care.

I was grateful to meet with so many Arkansans, and this week I'm sharing what I've learned with my colleagues here in Washington. Today, the Senate Finance Committee launched a series of roundtable discussions in advance of drafting a health care reform bill. From my seat on the committee, I'm giving Arkansans a voice in these discussions.

With Arkansas Pride,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Blanche R. Lincoln'.

[View My "Taking the Pulse of Rural Health Care" Photo Gallery](#)

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